

1609/4633
A WARNING to all Christian Governours and Subjects, to follow Righteousness and Faith.

A
SERMON

Preach'd on the 3d of APRIL, 1748.

AT THE
GRAND SESSIONS
HOLDEN AT
CAERMARTHEN

Before the Hon. JOHN POLLEN, Esq;
One of his Majesty's Justices of Oyer and
Terminer for the several Counties of
Caermarthens, Pembroke, and Cardigan.

By DAVID SCURLOCK,
Of BLANCORS in Caermarthenshire, A. M.

LUKE xi. 46. *And he said, Woe unto you also, ye Lawyers: For ye lade Men with Burdens grievous to be borne, and ye your selves touch not the Burdens with one of your Fingers.*

S A R U M:

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by B. COLLINS
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MDCCXLVIII.

A WARNING is hereby given
that any person who shall
violate the laws of the State
and County of ...

SEERMON

Published on the 1st of ...
AT THE
GRAND SESSIONS

HOLDEN AT
COURT HOUSE

By the Hon. Judge ...
One of the Justices of the ...
County of ...

And a ...
of the ...

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...

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
PHILIP
Lord HARDWICKE,
Lord HIGH CHANCELLOR
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN.

My LORD,
WHEN I was first induced to
 give the following Sermon to be
 printed, I instantly resolved
 that it should appear in Pub-
 lick under the Patronage of your Lord-
 ship's great Name.

But I took not this Resolution out of any
 private self-interested Motive, of obtaining
 Church Preferment by these Means through

your Lordship's Favour: for it is now grown
of the latest in Life for me to think of
Matters of that kind. T O T

And indeed, my Lord, it has ever been
my real Sentiment, that all importunate
Applications on these Occasions are greatly
repugnant to the many Laws of *England*,
Common and Statute, Canon and Civil now
in Force, which strictly and carefully aim
at preserving a free and unbiaſſed Diſpoſal
of Preferments in the Church, according
to the Talents, and Abilities of Men beſt
qualified for ſupplying the Duties of the
ſeveral Stations therein reſpectively.

The Publick happy Effects of a punc-
tual Conformity to the Intention of the
before-mentioned Laws, in making Church
Promotions, did very eminently appear in
the Reign of that excellent Princeſs, good
Queen *Elizabeth*. For the Clergy in that
Reign, my Lord, did never arrive at Pre-
ferment, by ſpending their Time in eager
Sollicitations at Court, or attending the
Levees of the Great, much leſs by any
other more unworthy, and unjuſtifiable
Methods.

But



But it was the Custom of that most admirable Queen, to keep by her, a List of the Names of those Men she cou'd, upon enquiry, be inform'd of among the Clergy, who most usefully employed their Time in diligent, and laborious Study, and Meditation, and in Preaching sound Doctrine, and true Religion to her Subjects, and defending them against the Errors and Superstitions of Popery: And her Majesty usually fill'd the Church-Preferments, as they became vacant, out of such her List of Men, eminent for Learning and Knowledge, without their pressing and solliciting for them, and even, tho' she seldom or never saw them, making their Bowes, and paying their Devoirs at Court.

And, by these Means, my Lord, the Study of the Arts and Sciences, and of universal Learning, Divine and Human, was in the Reign of that great and Glorious Queen, very highly promoted and encouraged, and the chief Stations in the Church of England were then adorned with a Clergy, who were as burning and shining Lights to the World, who were a living
Credit

Credit and an impregnable Barrier to the reform'd Religion, and who were, in the Sight and Acknowledgments of all Christians, a very great and considerable Honour to the British Nation,

Then, my Lord, as I was not moved to the making this Address by any private View to myself, of applying for Promotion in the Church, so neither was I excited to it by a vain Conceit of any Skill of mine, to display that eminent Sufficiency, and those great Accomplishments, with which your Lordship adorns the High Office you hold in the State.

It would be a very superfluous Attempt to go about to celebrate so established a Character as your Lordship's: For to set forth a Description of those splendid Talents and Abilities, and that Evenness and Serenity of Temper and Spirit, with which Heaven has blessed, and qualified your Lordship, for transacting with ease the publick and most important Affairs of civil Judicature, and of National Polity, and by which you have engaged the Admiration

tion, and conciliated the Love and Respect of your Country, would be only to write an Encomium which is already published, and proclaimed by the common and universal Voice of all Orders and Degrees, and Parties of Men in the Kingdom.

But, my Lord, the only true and real Aim of this my Application to your Lordship, is, humbly to implore your compassionate and generous Concern, and Care for redressing those publick and insupportable Grievances, which all Ranks of Men in the Nation generally suffer by tedious and expensive Law-Suits.

This is a very beneficent, and glorious Office indeed, my Lord, which will be highly worthy of your most extensive Magnanimity, and publick Spirit to perform; and if there cannot be a sufficient Plan form'd and executed, for these great Ends and Purposes, while a Personage of your Lordship's comprehensive Knowledge and Abilities sits at the Helm of State, we must despair of ever seeing a good Work of this Nature effectually accomplished.

As

As a Reformation of Religion from the Corruptions of Popery, my Lord, could not, in any human Probability, have been brought about in the Reign of King Henry VIII. even by all the peremptoriness and impetuosity of that Prince's Temper and Conduct; without a helping Hand from some of the leading and most considerable Men among the then Clergy, in pointing out the Way to it; so it is not conceivable that a full and adequate Remedy for those like Kind of Evils, Mischiefs, and Oppressions, which the Nation now feels from the corrupt Proceedings at Law, can be successfully invented and applied, without the generous Aid of some of the chief Gentlemen brought up to the Profession of Lawyers for those Ends. It is too glaring a Truth to be denied, my Lord, that there is in these Times as much Occasion for a Reformation in the latter, as there heretofore, was in the former of the before-mentioned Cases. For the gross Deviations from, and even utter Perversions of the Law of Righteousness, which are too com-
monly

monly practised under the Name or Notion of Law Proceedings among us, and which, under Pretence of protecting, do only consume, ravish, and devour the Properties of the People, may be very aptly compared to those vast Degeneracies from the true Religion, and to the oppressive Consequences thereof, which overspread and burthened the Kingdom in the darkest of the Popish Ages. Insomuch that some Men have, on this Account thought, that as the Nation in former Times groaned under a religious, so it has, in later Days, been oppressed with a Kind of, equally pernicious, civil Popery.

It is true, my Lord, that the celebrated Lord Somers, and some others of your Lordship's Predecessors in the High Office you now hold, were sensible of this publick Grievance and Calamity, and did meditate and design some general Regulation of oppressive Practices at Law in the Nation; but the Misfortune is, that there never yet has any Scheme at all of that Kind been thoroughly brought to effect.

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But it is very possible, my Lord, that this important Work of reforming Corruptions at Law, may be reserv'd for the Performance of your Lordship's superior and elevated Genius, and that you may become the mighty Instrument of Divine Providence, in forming and carrying into effectual Execution a Project of such vast and lasting Benefit and Advantage to your Country, which others have been able only to talk of; and may by that Means gain the Applauses of the present, and all future Ages, and render your Name as immortal as are those of the first great Reformers of Religion among us, *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, without the Risk of undergoing any Thing like the Fate which they endured. We have, my Lord, now a most gracious Prince upon the Throne, who would, without doubt, give all imaginable Encouragement to an Undertaking of so universal a Tendency to the Welfare of all his Subjects; and, however arduous a Work it may be in itself, yet that there is nothing impracticable in the Acheivement of it, is very

is very visible from what is at this present Time transacting in the Kingdom of *Prussia*, where there has been for upwards of a Year past, and now actually is, a Regulation of Law Proceedings successfully carried on by Vertue of a Commission from a very near Relation of our sacred Sovereign, the King of that Country. And, as a further Instance of the feasibility of the Undertaking here humbly recommended to your Lordship, we are informed, my Lord, by the publick News-Papers of an effectual Reformation in the Practice of the Laws, which has been lately made, in another Protestant State, over which a most excellent Prince, who has for his Consort a Royal Daughter of our good and gracious King, now presides and reigns: For we are expressly assured, by very late Advices from *Denmark*, that several of the Provinces, and almost all the great Cities in that Kingdom, have presented Addresses to their King, conceiv'd in Terms the most warm, the most respectful, and the most affectionate that can be; in which they give his Majesty Thanks

for that great and envied Happiness which they have enjoy'd under his Father's Administration and his own; whose Reigns, they say, will be famous to Posterity, not for Slaughter and Conquests, but for the Reformations of Government, and the Improvement of the Arts of Peace, more especially correcting the Errors and Delays that, in Spite of the wise Regulations made in former Times, were crept into the Practice of their Laws.

I wou'd not presume, my Lord, to propose any Method how this wou'd for Reformation among us may be best effected; but if the Reduction of all useless Offices in the Law should happen to be a Part of the Scheme, which your Lordship might judge proper to form for this Purpose, and there should be occasion for raising any great or immense Sum of Money to pay off, and satisfy the Gentlemen possess'd of the Offices to be annihilated, to the full Value thereof, and to defray all other Charges of your Lordship's whole Plan, on so very great and important an Undertaking, I believe I may venture to affirm, that
there's

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there's hardly a Man living in the Kingdom, who would not cheerfully consent even to a Poll-Tax, for one Year only, in order to raise Money sufficient for this great End, provided it might be entitled, *a one Year's Tax only of the People of Great-Britain, for the Redemption of themselves and their Posterity, from all Grievances and Oppressions, by tedious and exorbitant Proceedings at Law hereafter for ever.*

Now, my Lord, I intreat you to excuse, with your usual Candour and Generosity, the Freedom of this Address; and permit me to subscribe myself, with the greatest Deference, Veneration, and Respect,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

BLANCOSS,
May 1748.

And most devoted

Humble Servant,

DAVID SCURLOCK.

there's hardly a Man living in the Kingdom, who would not cheerfully consent even to a Poll-Tax, for one Year only, in order to raise Money sufficient for this great End, provided it might be entitl'd, a New Tax only of the People of Great-Britain; for the Redemption of themselves and their Posterity, from all Grievances and Oppressions, by tedious and expensive Proceedings at Law, hereafter for ever.

Now, my Lord, I intreat you to execute, with your usual Candour and Generosity, the Freedom of this Address; and permit me to subscribe myself, with the greatest Defiance, Veneration, and Respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

And most devoted

Humble Servant,

DAVID SCURLOCK.



II TIM. CHAP. ii. Ver. 22.

Follow Righteousness, Faith,—

The whole Context runs thus :

*Follow Righteousness, Faith, Cha-
rity, Peace with them that call on
the Lord out of a pure Heart.*

*But foolish and unlearned Questions
avoid, knowing that they do gen-
der Strifes.*

IN this passage of holy Writ there are
some matters and things in religion
conceived and declared by the Apostle,
to be fix'd and immutable, as well as
others which may be made the subject of
questions and controversies; and the natu-
ral method of our proposing and recom-
mending to your consideration the advice
here given by him of avoiding the one, and
following the other of these things, is to
observe distinctly what those indisputable
duties

duties of religion are, which he enjoins us to pursue. And from thence we may easily conceive what those foolish and unlearned questions may be, which he cautions us against busying ourselves with; for all questions are foolish which do not manifestly tend to the support of real and true Religion.

We are to observe then, that the great and undisputed duties of religion, which the Apostle enjoins us to follow, are righteousness, faith, charity, and peace.

The first of these duties, viz. that of following righteousness, has been by me already, in some measure, considered, and discoursed upon from this place some time ago.

And I then observ'd to you, that righteousness, in the most extensive sense of the word, comprehends all moral virtues; and that to follow righteousness is to act suitably to that nature and reason with which we are endowed; and that, in this general view of the duty, it requires us to do what is right, in our capacity of rational beings, in respect to God, as our great Creator and Governour of the universe; and to ourselves as well as to our neighbour.

And



And here it is properly to be premised, that in this injunction of the Apostles, which thus requires us to follow righteousness, there are two things, in general, taken for granted.

- I. That there is a certain and immutable law, which marks out the difference between right and wrong, in regard it would be absurd to bid Men follow what is right, if there were no difference in the nature of things. And
- II. That the law which points out this difference is plain and obvious to the perceptions of Men, otherwise it would be in vain to require them to observe and follow it as a rule of action, how certain soever that difference might be in itself.

We cannot therefore but conceive these two suppositions or concessions to be inseparable from the notion of Man's having the choice what to pursue; that there is a difference in things, and that he can clearly perceive that difference, in order to make righteousness the standard and measure of his actions.

And in consequence of the truth of these propositions it follows, that every trans-

gression against righteousness is a voluntary neglect of, or an arbitrary deviation from a certain known law.

For as there can be no transgression where there is no law, so to be without the knowledge or perception of any law is the same as to have none; and therefore every transgression of the law of righteousness necessarily involves in it the clear and certain idea of some sort of willfulness, iniquity and wickedness in the agent that is guilty of such transgression.

And this willfulness and wickedness of Men may more fully, and at large appear in the sequel of this discourse; in which it shall be my present business to address you both as rational beings and as Christians; and in the first place, I shall lay before you a plain and clear representation of what the Apostle requires of you, in enjoining you to follow righteousness in all your dealings with one another, as Men or rational creatures; and then Secondly shall proceed to observe to you what he would recommend to your pursuit as Christians, in directing you to follow faith.

In the first place then, righteousness, in the passage of scripture now before us, is properly and precisely proposed for that rule or law by which a Man is to form and regulate

regulate his actions with respect to his neighbour; and this rule is no other, but that he should always do what his unbiass'd reason tells him is right; or that he should steadily pursue the prescriptions of right reason in his deportment and dealings with Men. The relations and circumstances of things, are the objects of Man's reason and moral consideration in all cases; and the impartial dictates of his reason, what is right in respect of them, give him the rule which he is to follow in his actions.

So righteousness towards our neighbour, or doing what is right with respect to a fellow creature, is to treat him in such manner as reason tells us one of the same nature with ourselves ought to be treated by us, in any particular circumstance wherein he may be placed in our view. And this notion of righteousness is founded on the relations which Men bear to one another, as they are by nature equals: for they who are by nature equal, owe one another equal treatment, that is, one Man should of right treat another Man just in such manner as he would himself, in like circumstances, reasonably expect to be treated by him. And this is, properly speaking, that righteousness, which we are directed in the Text to follow in our conduct with respect to our neighbour.

You may perhaps say, that thus to make the dictates of every private Man's reason and judgment the rules of his behaviour towards others, appears to you to be but an uncertain, precarious method of establishing justice and righteousness among mankind; whilst you take your notion of it from what you see and observe in their ordinary, and but too common dealings with one another.

But then I must desire you to remember and take special notice, that the conduct and example of particular Men, is never to be allowed as any argument against the truth and certainty of a general rule; nor can the willful deviations of any numbers of Men from it be, in the least, admitted as a proof of any defect or insufficiency in the rule itself. For this rule is as fixt and immutable, as the common and universal nature of mankind; and the dictate of reason is one and the same invariable principle in all Men's souls, which never misguides any that are willing to follow it. Inasmuch that we find our blessed Saviour thought that there could not be a plainer or truer rule of righteous dealing between Man and Man proposed than this; of doing to one another as we would have others, in like circumstances, do unto us; nor was our Lord Christ apprehensive,

hensive, that the reason of Men's minds would be insufficient to direct the application of this rule in all cases. But as the rule he thus lays down is clear and self-evident, and commands our assent as soon as we hear it; so he knew it would be effectual to remove every cause of contention, and to establish harmony, good agreement; and even the greatest benevolence amongst Men, if they would be ever as willing to do right as they are able to discern what that right is: for the occasion why righteousness does not always take place in Men's dealings with each other, is not because they are, thro' any defect in their understanding, unable to discover what is reason, but because, thro' the perverseness of their wills, they determinately disobey its directions in the particular cases and circumstances that occur amongst them.

I grant you, that self-love and prejudice may, in some measure, darken the understanding, and hinder a Man to see what is reason, or the right of the case between him and his neighbour, as clearly as he would do, if there were no such thing as self-love or passion implanted in his nature; but then his passions do not so far over-cast the light of his understanding, as to disable him to perceive what is right in any case,
if he

if he can but be made willing to see it, or coolly, attentively, and seriously to consider it.

For the rule prescrib'd by Christ, supposes there are partial passions in Men which may sway them, and it takes so far notice of their frailties, as to guard against the effects of them in their dealings with each other; in regard it puts a Man into the situation of his neighbour, whose case and circumstance he is to judge of, before it allows him to determine how to behave towards him; and then he cannot, surely, but do what is fair to another, if you can but make him willing to do the very same thing as he would really and reasonably wish should, in that view, be done to himself.

So that if Men, with this rule in their eye, do not follow righteousness in their dealings with one another, it is not because the rule is defective, or that they want the faculty to discern what is right in any case; but because they want the will to comply with it when they discern it, and do positively act in a determined opposition to it.

And if Men do not, or will not, comply with reason or righteousness, in any instance, when they plainly see it; there is no help for that, in regard neither God nor nature have proposed any method, nor is it conceiv-

conceivable to us how any method could be contrived, to restrain and hinder the willful unrighteousness and iniquity of Men; but they must be left to the issue and consequences thereof: and the inevitable consequences of that spirit of willfulness in Men, which is inconsistent with, and contrary to that law of nature and reason which God hath given them, are strifes and enmities among one another considered as sociable creatures, as well as a dis-union from God considered as their great Creator and Governour, and likewise disorder and disturbance, pain, trouble, and vexation in their own souls considered as individuals and particular persons.

But then let not Men mis-represent the matter, and say that ever they do wrong, because they cannot of themselves judge what is right; for you see that is but a false plea, and amounts to no more, but only in putting the head-strongness or perverseness of their wills to the fault of their understandings, and charging God with requiring their constant obedience to the law of righteousness, without furnishing them with the faculty of discerning its directions in one half of the circumstances wherein it is to be observed.

Whereas, in truth, the law of nature or reason

reason prescribes much plainer and more certain directions, to Men in all their dealings with each other, than the very best municipal laws of countries ever provide them with: for those laws are for the most part only the intricate contrivancies of particular Men, who perhaps, followed contrary interests and designs when they formed them; and they do often deviate from the law of righteousness, and sometimes directly contradict it.

Add to this, that the intricacy and uncertainty of the municipal laws of countries in general, and of our own nation in particular, is greatly increas'd by the dilatory, grievous, and oppressive ways of proceeding made use of by lawyers under the notion and pretence of dispensing those laws. And these ways of proceeding among us of this realm, are but too too often absolutely inconsistent with, and utterly subversive of all the rules of righteousness that were ever allowed by any moralists in the world; nay, in truth, what are but too commonly called and practis'd as law-proceedings among us are, for the most part, bare-faced tricks and devices of lawyers, for committing of plunder, oppression, and depredations on the properties of their fellow subjects, only to enrich themselves. And there-

fore it highly concerns us all, my brethren, to offer up our prayers to Almighty God, that those who hold the supreme, civil power among us, may one time or other, be as able (as they have often shewed themselves very willing and well disposed) to find out a suitable and effectual remedy, for the great and publick mischiefs, and insupportable grievances and oppressions, which are too commonly imposed upon the people of this poor nation, by such law proceedings as are practised under pretence of dispensing justice and righteousness amongst them. It is observable, from the printed accounts which have been very lately published, That, that truly wise and great Prince, or supreme Governor the King of Prussia, hath very successfully executed a project or plan, formed by his Majesty himself, for putting an end to all tedious law-suits, and reforming the exorbitancies of the law proceedings in his dominions. And it is said that the commissioners authorised and appointed by that most excellent King, for the aforesaid glorious end and purposes, did, in so short a time as within the compass of one single year, and only in that one part of his kingdom which is called Pomerania, reduce two thousand and four hundred causes depending in the several courts of law there, to the number of thirteen only:

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There is no reason to doubt, but that upon the same plan, there was a proportionable reformation, made in the law-proceedings in all the other parts of that admirable King's dominions. And oh! my my friends! how many, many thousand families among his subjects has this wise and good Prince, by these means, to his immortal honour saved, and prevented from being ruined by tedious and devouring law-suits; how providently like a good shepherd watching over his flock, has he thus snatched and rescued his people, as it were out of the paws of hungry and rapacious lions, and ravenous wolves and bears! and what a vast and unspeakable blessing and happiness is it for any nation or kingdom to have so truly good and great, so beneficent and magnanimous a Prince to reign over them.

Methinks I hear his subjects throughout his whole kingdom sounding forth his praises and eulogiums with grateful hearts, for these benefits which they receive of his benign government, in having their grievances redressed, and being thus delivered from oppression in the several courts of judicature amongst them; and styling him, for these publick and important services, their gracious sovereign, their kind and careful guardian and protector, and the tender
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and indulgent father of the several countries over which he presides and reigns. Now it were highly to be wished, that the supreme civil powers, in all other parts of the Christian world, would be so good as to follow the example of this just and righteous Prince and governor, this consummate statesman, this wise and able legislator, the King of Prussia, in reforming the law proceedings, and delivering their subjects from the terrible grievances and hardships they undergo, by lingering and ruinous law-suits in their several dominions respectively.

When or in what period of time, we, the subjects of this kingdom, shall be so happy, as to see any scheme or project of this glorious kind formed, and successfully carried into execution among us, the Lord in Heaven alone knows; and we can only pray that he may, by his gracious and divine providence, speedily bring something of the same kind about in this our nation.

In the mean-time it is the duty of my office to persuade every one of you, my brethren, and to charge you, in the name of God and of Christ, that you will deal justly and honestly with each other in all your wordly affairs, and avoid entering into any vexatious disputes and law-suits one against another; for it is very unbecoming you as

Christians, *for brother to go to law with brother*, especially during the continuance, and before there is any reformation made in those oppressive law-proceedings, which are so universally complained of among us.

This advice you may every one of you easily comply with, only by observing that plain law of righteousness, which I am now pressing upon you: for every man knows what reason is from the innate principles and dictates of his own soul, and may constantly follow it in dealing with his neighbour in all cases, only by proportioning his behaviour towards him according to his own fair expectations from him. And surely it is in the power of every Man living, without any difficulty, to act thus, that will but make an honest use of that reason and understanding, which God hath given him.

It is quite useless for me to go about any way to perplex your minds in branching out of the law of righteousness into particular rules of action, for directing Men in all ranks or relations of social and civil life, how to carry on an orderly and conscientious commerce, or intercourse with one another.

True it is indeed, that this sort of task or employment hath afforded some kind of divines work enough for numberless volumes, in stating cases of conscience, and has also furnished

furnished lawyers with vain, empty pretences to sufficient matter, for those infinite rules and directions in civil cases and affairs, which are stored up in their various and innumerable, intricate, inconsistent, and insignificant books of digests, institutes and reports.

But then I must observe to you, my fellow Christians, for the great comfort and satisfaction of all plain, honest, well-meaning Men, that our blessed Lord and Saviour did not, by any means, think it a good method of teaching Men their duty, to lay before them all contingent and possible cases that might occur, and the various circumstances that might arise out of the natural or political relations, that they stand in towards one another, and to distract their minds with volumes of rules and directions, in order to point out to them the righteous conduct that is respectively required in particular persons: for in all matters of justice, right conduct, and fair dealing between Man and Man, with respect to all social relations, our blessed Lord gives us but one plain general rule, and leaves every Man to the clear report of his own conscience for instruction, how to apply that rule in all cases.

And as that law by which every Man is thus to regulate his actions is written in his own mind, and is ever ready at hand to direct

rest him, on all occasions, upon his honest and unbyass'd appeal to it. It is thither that we Christian preachers must, after our Lord's example, refer him for directions in all his particular relations and circumstances of life.

In a word, the great and general rule prescribed to us by our blessed Saviour is this, *viz.* that every Man in all his words, actions, and designs, whereby he carries on any intercourse or communication with all other Men, is only to ask himself and his own heart in every particular case or circumstance, this plain question, whether he means, speaks, and acts in such a manner towards another, as he would really and reasonably have that other, in the like circumstance, mean, speak, and act with respect to himself?

Now, there is no doubt but that every Man will desire and expect to meet with sincerity and uprightness in the intentions, with truth and veracity in the words, and with justice and fairness in the actions of all other Men in every case, wherein he has dealings with them, whether it be in affairs of trade and commerce, or in the offices, and conversations of civil and domestick life; and such his desire and expectation from others is the plain rule of righteousness, which he is to follow in his conduct towards them; and he must stand condemned

ned by his own reason in every instance of fraud and falshood, injustice and iniquity, nay, of unkindness and incivility, or of indecorum and indecency, which he is guilty of towards others; because it is contrary to that common law, by which he would himself condemn all others in the same instances of misbehaviour towards himself.

This then is the law of righteousness by which every Man must judge himself, and by which God also will finally judge us all. The great question, which it must be the common concern of every one of us to answer before his dread tribunal is this; have you in all your designs, words, and actions treated others in such manner, as you wou'd be willing, in the like case, to be treated yourself? or, which amounts to the same purpose, have you made an honest use of that law of reason, which God hath implanted in your nature, in observing and following the right of things, which it directed you to, in all your conversations in the world? and this will, in the last great judgment of mankind appear to be a very sufficient rule, by which our consciences may soon be finally sifted, and our trial quickly dispatched: for we shall not then, upon that great and solemn occasion, think that the reason of mankind prescribes such precarious and uncertain rules of action to them,

them, in any possible circumstances, as to make it necessary to put volumes of cases and directions into their hands, to inform their consciences how to give a true, full, and punctual answer at this last grand inquest or enquiry, in all respects. But every Man's understanding will be found then but too clear in discovering, and too particular and exact in condemning his deviations from the right and truth of the case, in all the dealings which he has transacted with his neighbour throughout his whole life.

Let us then beware how we neglect, or go against the reason of our own minds in any case; for this law of our nature is God's unchangeable will concerning reasonable creatures, by which Men must stand or fall now and for ever. And therefore let us never think that any kind of notion about religion can possibly justify or uphold Man in the willful neglect of the law of righteousness; *for heaven and earth shall pass away before one tittle can fail.* And the whole end of all revelations, which God hath made of himself to Mankind, of all communications which he ever did, or ever does carry on with them, is only to warn, to excite, or to assist them in the sincere observance of this law. But our great God and Creator may as soon alter the nature of Men, and the nature of things, as not let the
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the regard they pay to this law be the standing measure of their happiness or misery; as not let them be in a state of unity and peace, or of trouble and confusion, every Man within his own soul, as well as all Men in common society with one another, in the proportion that they do, or do not obey the law of righteousness; and more need not be observed, to shew the importance of this injunction of the Apostles, which requires you to follow righteousness. So now I am to proceed to the next duty which he enjoins us to pursue, and that is faith. And I proposed to observe to you in the second place, what the Apostle would recommend to our pursuit, in enjoining us to follow faith.

Now faith in the general sense and meaning of the word, is the persuasion of a Man's mind concerning the truth of any thing, as far forth as it may appear to him to be grounded on reasonable evidence; and he is susceptible of such persuasion, as he is an intelligent being, endued with reason and understanding, insomuch that unbelief of any thing, after plain evidence received of its truth, must arise from a Man's offering a voluntary violence to the chief and fundamental principles of his nature; and therefore must be in itself the highest degree of sin and perverseness.

The first and most obvious matter of di-

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vine faith that occurs to us, as Men, is a persuasion of the being and perfections of God. For this faith is the immediate result of those faculties of reason and reflection, which are implanted in the nature of Man, inasmuch as he must needs know that he did not bring himself into being, and cannot but be persuaded that no finite being, like himself ever could, no more than he can, be the cause of its own existence; and therefore that there must be some infinitely good, wise, and powerful being necessarily and eternally existing of himself alone, from whom he, and every Man, and every finite thing must originally have had a beginning.

And in consequence of the belief of such an immensely great, and tremendous Being, it cannot but appear reasonable to think that he truly ought to be in the highest Degree, revered, and honoured, and adored by all his intelligent Creatures. And also, that mankind are obliged to receive and obey all revelations of his sacred and awful Will, which he may please to convey to them, with any satisfactory evidence that they come from him.

So then, in this view of the matter, that Christian Faith, required of us by the Apostle; is properly speaking, a persuasion of the truth of Doctrines contained in the Gospel, as the same is grounded on reasonable evidence, that they are revelations of
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God's mind to Men. For it is certainly our duty to believe the Gospel to be a divine revelation, so far forth as the evidences, offered to us to prove it to be so, are, in all reason sufficient to induce such a belief.

Now the evidences upon which Men are required to believe the Gospel Doctrines to be from God, are the miracles wrought for the confirmation of them; and these miracles were wrought by the divine power, on purpose for the ground of men's Faith, as they are, in reason a very sufficient attestation of the divine Authority of those persons, who reveal a Doctrine to Men as the Will of God: For it is hither that Christ doth himself generally refer Men for a proof of the divinity of his Person and Doctrine. *The works saith he, that I do in my Fathers Name, they bear witness of me, that he hath sent me.*

So then, we believe the Gospel doctrine to be a divine Revelation, because miracles were wrought for the confirmation of it; and we believe that these miracles were wrought for this end, because we have the credible report of those, who saw them performed, convey'd to us in such a manner, as leaves us not the least reason to doubt but that the said report, of the Eye-witness of such performances, hath been very truly and faithfully transmitted to us.

For these things were written that we might believe; and the writings wherein they are recorded, are as credible and undisputed a History as any that is extant in the World; and credible History doth commonly give Men sufficient assurance of matters of Fact, which happened many ages before they were born; infomuch that they may as certainly believe, and not make any more doubt of them, than if they had themselves seen them with their Eyes. For it is plain that a Man may be as undoubtedly and certainly satisfied of the truth of matters of Fact from the credit of History, as from his own Senses.

We make, for instance, no more doubt whether there was such a Person as *Alexander* the Great, and whether he overcame *Darius* King of *Persia*, or whether any such like uncontroverted matter of History be true, than we do, whether we see one another here at this present time.

And the History of miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles is no ordinary History; but it is a History in the truth of which the universal interest of mankind is very highly concerned; and therefore we may well conceive, that the veracity of it hath been more strictly examined, and by such examination more firmly established than that of any other History whatsoever.

Yet, If we do but regard the account of miracles recorded in the Gospel, as an ordinary credible History only, we have, upon the credit of such History, sufficient reason to believe that they were undoubtedly performed; and consequently we have a sufficient ground of persuasion that the Doctrine of the Gospel, for the confirmation of which they were wrought did come from God.

But it may seem needless in this Assembly, to set forth the evidences, which prove the Gospel to be a revelation from God; in regard that we would all of us willingly have it supposed, that we have fully examined the grounds on which we entertain the Faith; and that we are firmly persuaded of the sufficiency of them, and do truly profess a belief of the Christian Doctrine, without any degree of doubting.

Yet



Yet as the truth of Men's persuasions may be best proved from the agreement of their practices with their professions; we will now briefly mention the Doctrine we profess to believe, and observe the occasion Men had for a revelation of that Doctrine; and then we will shew that they cannot be said truly to believe it without conforming to the end for which it was given.

The sum of the Christian Revelation or Doctrine, in short, is this, that God sent his only begotten Son into the World to give laws to Mankind and enforce those laws by sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments; to purchase by the sacrifice of his Body and Blood forgiveness of Sins, and acceptance with God for them, upon their repentance of Sins past, and sincere obedience to his laws for the future.

Now from the subject matter of this revelation, it appears, that the Souls of Men had degenerated, and that their condition induced a necessity of a Mediator, Intercessor and Redeemer, for their Restoration and Recovery. For we must confess, that the Law of Reason and Righteousness, which God implanted in the nature of Man, as the first declaration of his Will to him, was so full and effectual a direction to his Happiness, that if he had steadily and punctually followed it without any Deviation, he would have stood justified and accepted before God by that law, and have remained perfect and happy in himself. And in that case, he would have had no need of any further Revelation to direct him, or of a Redeemer to intercede for him.

But alas! this is a case which is not to be met with among the frail race of mortal Men; and therefore since there is not a man upon earth that can venture to put himself upon his own justification, according to this Law, in the sight of God, every Man must perceive the need he has of some other method of acceptance, besides the unerring observance of the pure Law of Reason.

And he could never have had an entire assurance of any such Method but by Revelation from God himself, who first gave that Law to Man, and who alone knew what allowances might be made for any deviat-

ons from it, consistently either with his own Authority, or with his creatures Perfection, both which are founded upon it, and cannot be preserved without a due regard to it.

God therefore in mercy to sinful Men, has been pleased to make such a revelation to them, as puts them upon terms with him, which equally secure his laws from neglect; and preserve frail offenders against them from irremediable despair. For the Gospel of Christ is a dispensation of the utmost Grace to repenting Sinners, and at the same time a revelation of the greatest wrath against such as reject these offers, of Grace, and persist in a course of unrighteousness.

To believe then, that God hath by the mouth of Christ, proposed these terms to Men; to believe that he will accept Sinners that call on him in the name of his Son Jesus, and will reward them with eternal Felicity upon their hearty repentance of past deviations from his Laws, and sincere endeavours to observe them uniformly for the future; and to believe also that we shall utterly be condemned by God, and be made miserable for ever, if we persist in a willful neglect of his Laws,—To believe this Doctrine I say then, and to act in the course of your Lives, as if you were firmly persuaded and undoubtedly assured that it is the word of God, is to form your lives upon a principle of Christian Faith, or to follow that Faith which the Apostle proposes, in the text, to your observance and pursuit.

So we see that followers of Faith must be followers of Righteousness still, which remains of eternal force of everlasting and indispensable obligation under the Christian Dispensation; wherein indeed there are allowances made, and helps provided for the impotency of a degenerate State; but yet there is no indulgence therein given to the impenitent, who not only willfully commit, but also negligently continue, or obstinately persist in any known Sin.

Follow Righteousness, follow Faith, saith the Apostle. Here Faith is plainly proposed in aid of the Law of Righteousness, to support and to reinforce it with new Sanctions, to engage and enable Men by new motives

motives and assistances to observe it; but never, Oh! never, by any means, can any notion of Faith release Men from it.

For Faith without Works is Dead; and Grace which doth not produce Holiness and Vertue in our Life and Manners is altogether ineffectual. Far be it therefore far from us to think, that any Faith of the Gospel will avail instead of a conformity to its Precepts which are founded in the Law of Reason; for if any one shall break, that is, shall live and persist in the breach of one the least of these Commandments, and shall teach Men so to do, he shall be accounted least in the Kingdom of God or of Christ. Let me then remind you of the caution, given by an Apostle in his own Words; little Children saith he, let no Man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous.

Thus then, my brethren, you may plainly perceive, that tho' the Gospel gives Men assurance of pardon from God for past Sins, upon Repentance, yet it ever requires future obedience to his Laws; though it promises assistance to their infirmities by the intervention of the *divine Spirit*, yet it constantly insists on their using their own earnest endeavours: So that to follow Faith is to lead as good moral lives as possibly you can, with your utmost care and diligence, from a persuasion of the truth of the Doctrines, or of the certainty and reality of the promises and threatnings of the Gospel.

And, to let you understand, that I am no ways, singular in my manner of thinking, and treating upon the Subjects of Righteousness and Faith, I shall here apprise you, that I have drawn this discourse to a Conclusion in the sentiments of some of the most eminent and celebrated Divines, that have lived in this Kingdom.

In truth the Faith of a Christian is so far from excusing him in the violation or neglect of the Laws of the Gospel, that it proposes no other end but to provide him with the most powerful arguments for enforcing an observance of these Laws, and when Faith fails of this Effect, it is not a real Faith, but a mere Name, or an empty profession and groundless pretence.

So

‘ So in a Word, we may be well assured, that how-
 ‘ ever any denominations of Christians may boast of the
 ‘ purity and excellency of their Faith; yet it is very
 ‘ certain that they do not, any of them, in good earnest,
 ‘ believe the Doctrines of the Gospel in their Minds, if
 ‘ they contradict the Precepts of it in their Lives. And
 ‘ such unbelieving or mere nominal Christians may be
 ‘ considered as the worst sort of Infidels; in regard that
 ‘ they not only resist or neglect a light and evidence
 ‘ which is, in all reason, sufficient to produce such
 ‘ a sincere Faith, as may be a principle of holiness and
 ‘ righteousness in their Manners; but do also add false-
 ‘ hood and hypocrisy to their unbelief, while they deny
 ‘ that Faith in their Actions, which they profess with
 ‘ their Mouths; and thereby provoke God to prove the
 ‘ truth of his Word, and to execute the threatnings he
 ‘ hath denounced against violators of his Laws.’

We must then, my Friends and Brethren, always
 remember, that it is not only confessing the Faith in
 words and zealous expressions; but fixing it in the
 mind as a firmly rooted persuasion, and pursuing it as
 a principle of Life and Action, that can prove a Chris-
 tian to be a true and sincere Believer; or become a
 means of his acceptance with God, and procure him
 Salvation under the Covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ:
 And therefore let us, every one of us, seriously and con-
 stantly endeavour, by the blessing and help of God, to
 embrace the Faith, which we profess in Christ, with all
 our Hearts, and to pursue it, in an universal obedience of
 our whole Lives and Actions to the Law of Righteous-
 ness, to the utmost of our Power.

ERRATA,

Page 23 Lines 21 22 for *in putting*, read *imputing*. Page
 32 Line 23 for *one tittle can fail*, read *one tittle of it
 can fail*,

F I N I S.

